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# Armenian Review

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## **This Issue**

**T**HIS special issue is devoted to two aspects of the Genocide of the Armenian people during the First World War: historiography and documentation. Drafts of the first two articles, by Irving L. Horowitz and James Reid, were presented in 1980 at a symposium on the genocide sponsored by the American Armenian International College.

The articles by Armen Hairapetian and Armen Hovannisian cover major aspects of the documentation found in U.S. archives. These were written for an Armenian studies course on archival research taught by Prof. Richard G. Hovannisian at the University of California, Los Angeles.

The articles on the sources on the Genocide are followed by the texts of 30 documents referred to in the essays. The documents are introduced without editorial changes. Also, statements by Armenian sources enclosed in the original texts have been omitted, thereby limiting the first group of documents to accounts authored by US diplomatic personnel. Documents from the US Inquiry files reproduced here were authored by American and European missionaries who witnessed the tragic events that began in 1915. The documents from the State Department were declassified in 1961; those from the US Inquiry were declassified in 1980.

## Contributors

IRVING LOUIS HOROWITZ is Hannah Arendt Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Political Science at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Prof. Horowitz is the author of numerous works on social movements and change; his most recent work, *Taking Lives*, is a study of genocides and mass murders.

JAMES REID is Assistant Professor of Near Eastern History at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Dr. Reid has specialized in the history of non-state social and ethnic formations. He is the author of *Tribalism and Society in Islamic Iran, 1500-1629* and is currently completing a major study on clan states in Central and West Asia.

ARMEN HAIRAPETIAN has completed undergraduate studies at the University of California at Los Angeles and is currently attending law school at the University of Southern California.

ARMEN HOVANNISIAN received his Bachelor of Arts degree in history from the University of California, Berkeley in 1983. He is currently teaching at the Ferahian Armenian High School in Encino, California and will enter law school in the autumn of 1984.

# The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman and Turkish Historiography

James Reid

GENOCIDE pervades the pages of modern history. While genocides occurred in the pre-modern past, and involved much agony and death, few could compare with the genocides of the twentieth century — the Armenian, Jewish, Stalinist purges, and Southeast Asian holocausts in the 1960s and 1970s to name only the most prominent. These attacks upon society resulted from a collision of factors: authoritarian leadership combined with reforming zeal and the disruption of the old social order. Such disruptions created a majority out of certain minorities — a majority which favored reforms and looked askance at minorities who were different or who retained the ways of the past. The best and most literary description of this process, at least as far as the Asian world is concerned, is found in Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago*. "We forget everything. What we remember is not what actually happened, not history, but merely that hackneyed dotted line they have chosen to drive into our memories by incessant hammering. . . . Therefore, if they demand that we forget even the public trials, we forget them. The proceedings were open and were reported in our newspapers, but they didn't drill a hole in our brains to make us remember — and so we've forgotten them."<sup>1</sup> This statement could be applied just as strongly and just as truly to the Armenian Genocide and its treatment by the Turkish writers of the twentieth century.

## THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF GENOCIDE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Genocide has deep roots in the past. As long as the peoples of the Middle East remained vast groupings of minorities, and no group

<sup>1</sup>A.I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago* (New York, 1973), I, p. 299.

claimed a majority following, genocide remained a prerogative of the elite. The Ottomans practiced *sörgün* (enforced migration), which aimed at the destruction of community life in the provinces and ensured that the subject ethnic groups remained a minority. As early as the mid-fifteenth century, Mehmed II or Mehmed the Conqueror rebuilt his capital as Istanbul. He brought there elements from all the peoples conquered and being conquered in his Empire. The act of enforced movement became the means by which the Ottomans treated similar problems in later centuries, though on a smaller scale from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.<sup>2</sup>

Enslavement was another means by which subject peoples were repressed. The Ottoman development of enslavement techniques was equalled by few others in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. Children between the ages of eight and twelve were taken from their parents to serve the Ottoman state in a regularized system known as *devshirme*. The impact of losing children bore heavily upon the Balkan and Anatolian Christians in the Ottoman Empire. By converting these children to Islam, the Ottomans avoided the Koranic injunction which forbade the use of Christians as soldiers. The *devshirme* and the *kapi kullare* (slave) standing army served as a precedent for universal military conscription in the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century. It broke the barriers of the Islamic past by permitting the conscription of a *dhimmī* population. The peoples against whom the act of conscription was perpetrated felt the chilling presence of a power elite ready to eradicate them if they did not comply. This was the act of the elite organization, though, and not of any special group. It was organized by the very slaves that had been raised earlier in the system.<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the Ottomans were not the only elite to enslave subjects. The leader of the Safavid Empire — a Qājār chieftain who by 1555 had conquered eastern Armenia and Georgia with much spilt blood — enslaved about ten thousand Armenians and Georgians to serve him and his family as soldiers, workers, and household slaves.<sup>4</sup> The corvée in Russia under the tsars was nearly as bad as enslavement and led to many peasant movements during the course of the two centuries from 1600 to 1779.<sup>5</sup>

When social dislocation or psychological fear failed to force the subjects into the mold desired by the elite, then violent means were

<sup>2</sup>Halil Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1500*, tr. N. Itzkowitz (New York, 1973), pp. 140-141 and 150-151. Professor Inalcik is a moderate whose historical approach to Ottoman history must be hailed as a breakthrough. He gives an excellent and impartial account of this practice.

<sup>3</sup>Speros Vryonis, Jr., "Turkish Gulams and Ottoman Devshirmes," *Der Islam* (1965):224-252; Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire*, pp. 77ff.; Peter Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354-1804* (Seattle, 1977), pp. 56-59.

<sup>4</sup>J. Reid, "The Qajar Uyumaq in the Safavid Period," *Iranian Studies* (1978):117-143.

<sup>5</sup>Paul Avrich, *Russian Rebels* (New York, 1972), pp. 1-7.

employed. One method commonly employed by the Ottomans was impalement. The act of impalement involved driving an eight-foot, steel-tipped stake through the torso of the victim without touching any of the vital organs. The victim died within three days and in much pain. In earlier times, impalement was used against bandits, rebels, and enemies. The Greek historian Kritovoulos, who served Mehmed II, notes that Mehmed impaled forty Byzantine captives and hung their bodies before the walls of Constantinople. For three days, the length of time which it took the captives to die, their screams and agony struck fear into Byzantine forces outside the city walls. Mehmed learned this tactic from the Transylvanian count Vlad Drakul, who had fought his father Murad II. In later times, impalement was used to intimidate subjects — even those who were not rebels. Such brutish acts continued in a more autocratic age when the Ottoman state wished to cow the subjects before the state.<sup>6</sup>

Mass murder took place as part of the normal function of the ruling elite, even in societies not pervaded by totalitarianism. Villagers, pastoralists, workmen, artisans, and others may have hated others from different backgrounds and attacked them, but they did not contribute to the general consensus that a genocide or an attack upon a certain people should be made. With exceptions, most military disputes between non-elite groups were individual acts made without considering religion, race, or ethnic background. There was no common cause by which to mobilize public opinion against certain communities. Only in the eighteenth century did Europe develop such a force, though society was still thoroughly elitist at the time. The Ottomans began to establish the ideal common cause only in the nineteenth century, though the development of an autocratic regime as early as the late eighteenth century aided genocidal tendencies in the Ottoman Empire even earlier than the nineteenth century. The struggle between the central government of Selim III (1789-1807) and the local notables may be considered the first stage in genocidal impulses developing within the Ottoman Empire. One might even go back further to the late seventeenth century under the Köprülü grand *vezirs* (prime ministers) and their successors who saw their Empire disintegrating and attempted to reform the Ottoman army to better keep their subjects in line. The effort did not begin to be all-inclusive until the nineteenth century, however. The ruling elites arrogated to themselves the right to punish by death recalcitrant notables or inefficient and corrupt officials. The eighteenth century saw a shift in emphasis toward the population of the Empire itself, though extreme at-

<sup>6</sup>Kritovoulos, a former Byzantine official in Ottoman service during the lifetime of Mehmed the Conqueror describes such impalements at the siege of Constantinople for 1453 in his writings on Mehmed. See also, Ivo Andrich, *The Bridge on the Drina*, tr. L.F. Edwards (New York, 1967), pp. 47ff.

tacks upon society as a whole could not begin in an organized fashion until the reforms undertaken in the nineteenth century.

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF AUTOCRACY IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The main culprit in the Armenian genocides perpetrated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was the Ottoman autocratic elite, especially the nineteenth century rulers who sought to build a society based upon conformity to a totalitarian ideal. Autocracy in the eighteenth century had concentrated upon maintaining the minorities as isolated and segregated communities. Sumptuary laws forced people to wear certain clothes, eat certain foods, and refrain from certain habits and indulge in others. Matters which did not concern people in earlier times now became all-important. Stereotyped identities were foisted upon the subjects to keep them separate from one another and weak vis-a-vis the government.<sup>7</sup>

The nineteenth century saw a reversal of this policy and aimed at creating a common Ottoman ideal — to be replaced in the 1890s and early 1900s with a Turkish ideal. The Ottomanists desired to create an Ottoman society where all within were Ottoman citizens who shared a common ideal. The Turkish nationalists likewise wished the Ottoman state to become a Turkish state in which all citizens were Turks. In either case, as long as there were subjects who persisted in belonging to the older communities, there were unabsorbed peoples who had no civic identity as far as the government was concerned. In any event, subjects who continued to maintain the old culture were looked upon as a burden to the state, an obstacle to the creation of a state and society based upon citizenship involvement and cultural assimilation. It was not long before this ideal caused organized efforts to eradicate non-assimilated communities. Efforts to assimilate involved educational reforms, especially in the last half of the nineteenth century. Pressures were placed upon subjects to learn how to become Ottoman in speech, manner, dress, and attitude. When this failed, the more dogmatic and chauvinistic Turkish nationalism took its place. There was no room for diversity in this doctrine. Either one conformed or was despised as an enemy of the state and Turkish society.

Autocracy in the Ottoman state has a long history. Its beginnings can be traced to the period following the Hapsburg annexation of Hungary between 1683 and 1699. One could even carry this autocratic trend back to the Köprülü advent to office in 1656. Whichever beginning date one chooses, it is evident that Ottoman rulers, generals, and officials became painfully aware of the need to preserve their rapidly

<sup>7</sup>L. Bittner, *Gesamteinventär des Winer Haus-, Hof-, und Staats archiv* (Vienna, 1937), II, p. 97.



disappearing Empire. The means chosen to combat decline was to develop the army — either the reform of the old *Yeni Cheri* (Janissary) Corps or the establishment of a new, European-style one. Desires to reform the army, coupled with the wish to keep subjects in line and keep out European intruders, provided the Ottoman ruling elite with the means to commit genocides as early as this period. Severity and grim imperiousness replaced whatever indulgence had been shown the subjects earlier. While the military reforms themselves were extremely weak until the 1790s, the intentions of those who favored reform were not pusillanimous. It was their aim to use the army against subjects and foreigners alike.<sup>8</sup>

The use of military measures alone were recognized by the Ottoman elite as insufficient to regulate and control the Empire. This led to increasingly more drastic changes after 1789. The Ottoman sultans Selim III (1789-1807) and Mahmud II (1808-1839) saw the need to strengthen their own role in the Ottoman system, and thereby to re-centralize the role of the Ottoman government in the Middle Eastern world. This act of recentralization was not only autocratic, but it paved the way for the totalitarian reforms of the Tanzimat, Abdul Hamid II, and the Young Turks. Selim's reform plans included the military and the bureaucracy, while after 1826 Mahmud developed a four-pronged plan of attack aimed at the army, bureaucracy, economy, and social reforms. All these reforms were aimed at transforming the institutions and society of the Ottoman world from a particularist empire into a centrally controlled imperial order with the Sultan at the peak, dominating and inspiring a unified society. This aim was especially true of Mahmud II's reforms. He and his bureaucratic minions termed their assault upon the old social order the *tanzimat-i hayriye* (beneficent reorderings).<sup>9</sup> This *tanzimat* was merely an attempt to build a society founded upon conformity to a single rather than a multiple ideal. Its beneficence may truly be doubted, since the Sultan and his followers were concerned mostly about minimizing challenges to their authoritarian rule. In the end, reorderings meant that all communities would conform or be destroyed.<sup>10</sup>

The concept of far-reaching social change was the theme which ran through the reforms in the era after Mahmud's death. Turkish nationalist historians generally view this period as the Tanzimat — the period of "reorderings." In this more than any preceding era, the Otto-

<sup>8</sup>Ahmed Lutfi, *Tarih-i Lutfi* (Istanbul).

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup>No overall survey of Mahmud II's reign exists, though sound analyses can be obtained from Uriel Heyd, "The Ottoman Ulema and Westernization in the Time of Selim III and Mahmud II," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* (1961):63-96; and works by Carter V. Findlay, including his excellent *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, 1980) which deals with the period 1789 to 1922.

mans developed their concept of social progress, an idea borrowed later by the Young Turks and Atatürk on a different plane. The Tanzimat began with the imperial rescript issued at Gülhane palace in 1839. This decree set the tone for subsequent reform efforts. Its goals, repeated in new forms, were embellished in Abdul Hamid II's reforms, the Young Turk program, and the nationalism promoted by Atatürk. The most telling passage established the principle of social conformity:

If there is no security of property, and people are not free from anxiety, no one cares for his state or his *millet* or works for erecting prosperity. On the other hand, if the situation is the opposite, that is, if property is secure, then the individual will follow his own affairs and his zeal for state and *millet* and motherland will increase daily.<sup>11</sup>

The aim behind the rescript was not concern for the subjects, but the desire to create a system which would impose security artificially. The same rescript saw fit to regularize tax assessments and military conscription on a universal basis. These efforts illustrate the first efforts to build a society founded upon uniformity, where all social differences must be effaced before the all-encompassing ideal society which is regulated and measured in every detail. There was already no place for Armenians in this Ottoman world. Killings and repression of Armenians as well as other subjects grew to ever more alarming proportions in this era. To the Ottomans, and later to certain Turkish nationalists, these peoples were "primitives" or "savages" who stood in the way of progress. They did not understand that these peoples might have their own conception of progress which could lead to some form of cooperation with the Ottomans.

The liberal opponents of the autocratic reformers Mustafa Reshid Pasha, Ali Pasha, and Fuad Pasha (who represented the bureaucratic elite) were the Ottomanists. These Ottomanists or Young Ottomans (*Gench Osmanlilar*) wished to establish an Ottoman state in which all the subjects lived as equals. The different subject groups would meet together in a parliamentary structure, sending representatives to Constantinople to meet in regular sessions. In return for participation in the political process, though, the subject peoples would be forced to assimilate into an Ottoman nationality. Such a common nationality was only a dream at this time, but it represented a totalitarian conception that the Young Turks would later continue. Its totalitarianism lay in its wish to create a majority Ottoman population and to expurgate any groups desiring to retain the particularist identities of their old cultures.

As autocratic as this movement might seem, the leaders such as Midhat Pasha were to the left of Abdul Hamid II and the bureaucrats. Abdul Hamid II became Sultan in 1876. He put an end to Young Ottoman reforms and to the Tanzimat period by 1878, claiming liberal reforms and a constitution were divisive in the face of Russian aggression. In place of the Young Ottoman program, Abdul Hamid II in-

<sup>11</sup>Lütfi, VI, pp. 60, 64-65.

stituted an absolutist autocratic policy. His aim was to make himself the absolute leader in Ottoman society — the only person in society with the privilege to make decisions.

Abdul Hamid II demanded unswerving loyalty from all subjects. To ensure their fidelity, he initiated a system of identification cards such that all subjects were registered with the central government. Being so identified, the subjects' movements within the Empire could be traced readily and their activities monitored. It was in fact the first step toward the horrendous massacres of the Armenians in 1895 and the Genocide during the First World War. To ensure that subjects would be loyal, Abdul Hamid pushed educational reforms to an extreme. He instituted secular schools throughout the Empire in which children were trained to be faithful subjects and true Ottomans. Their courses in history, culture, and language were indoctrination sessions. The state attempted to replace the family as the source of learning and the medium of child-rearing.

Certain groups and levels in society were affected more strongly than others by Abdul Hamid's measures. The failure to indoctrinate all peoples gave rise to the corollary acts of deportation and massacre. Human lives were lost in mounting numbers during Abdul Hamid's reign, when certain classes and communities refused to accept his perception of material or cultural progress. There was no reason for the subjects to accept the Ottoman, Russian, or Hapsburg nursemaid as the means to nurture growth. Human progress could not mean conforming to the familyless, personalityless automaton that Abdul Hamid II wanted to create as the model subject. Subjection became an act involving complete loss of identity for the sake of conforming to an artificial social ideal. It meant the loss of religion (Muslim, Christian, or Jewish), local cultural association, and independent thought. It is no wonder that massacre was so prevalent in the Ottoman Empire under Abdul Hamid.<sup>12</sup>

The Young Turk movement and the development of Turkish nationalism resisted Abdul Hamid's repressive assimilationism. It sought to establish a Turkic identity for those subjects of the Sultan who were of Turkish background. Because Turks were associated with the foundation of the Ottoman dynasty, most Turkish nationalists involved in the Young Turk movement did not limit their efforts to giving a Turkish identity to Turks alone. Rather, they sought to impose such an identity on all former Ottoman and Eurasian peoples. In doing this, the Young Turks laid the foundations for a new conformism in which all peoples left in the Empire would become Turks by language and culture. They deemed other cultures to be aberrancies, social errors which had to be erased forthwith. Thus, Ottoman political assimilationism was replaced with a Turkish cultural/religious assimilationist ideal among the Young Turks in the 1890s. Ibrahim Temo, Ziya Gökalp, and other ideologues formed one stratum in the movement.

<sup>12</sup>R. H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (Princeton, 1963), pp. 52-80, 114-135.

Eventually army officers like Enver, Talaat, and Jemal Pashas, Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk), and Ismet İnönü constituted another branch interested in promoting Turkish nationalism in order to strengthen their political position and to save the prestige of the Ottoman army. Turkish nationalism became the means by which the so-called military virtues were extolled. These officers were backed by bureaucrats and bourgeois cliques within the Ottoman state, even organizations which had nothing in common with Turkish nationalism except the desire to overthrow Abdul Hamid II. When Abdul Hamid was overthrown, though, the Turkish nationalist clique attempted to impose its nationalist framework upon the Ottoman state. When this began to fail, the triumvirate — Enver, Jemal, and Talaat — staged a coup, disbanded parliament, and proclaimed a state of emergency. They then attempted to impose a Turkish nationalist ideology upon the subject peoples by force. Enver, a megalomaniac, fought unceasing wars against the Balkan peoples to force them to accept his version of the Ottoman social order. Armenians, Arabs, and Kurds were compelled by Ottoman agents to attack each other in order to weaken them in the face of the Ottoman state. All subjects, who had no choice but to comply with Ottoman mandate, were compelled to send their children to schools to learn Turkish and to forget their own languages. The Young Turks wished to make all subjects into compliant Turks. It is in fact a policy followed by Ataturk and by his successors, who claim that ninety-seven percent of the population of Turkey are Turks, thus ignoring Kurds and other minorities which were and still are counted as Turks.<sup>13</sup> The Turkish nationalist doctrine of assimilation, servile subjection, military suppression, and annexation applied to Kurds and Arabs in Turkey, since the Ottomans felt threatened by the many minorities close to frontier zones. If they could be made into solid Turkish citizens, the Ottomans would feel more secure. If they could not become Turks, then they had to be eradicated.

#### TURKISH NATIONALISM AS AN IDEOLOGY AND ITS VIEW OF NON-TURKS

Ottomanist theories of social progress were complemented and consummated by Turkish nationalism. Both shared the ideal that there could be no progress as long as society remained particularist, according to the traditional Ottoman societal structure, in scope. They shared the notion that all subject peoples must unite in a common national culture, with the difference that Turkish nationalism went to an extreme in this respect — an extreme backed by military force. Out of this environment, Turkish theories on the *ermenî meselesi* (the Armenian problem) developed.

Armenians and other non-Turkish minorities like the Kurds and Arabs were viewed as a "problem," a burden to the true ideals of

<sup>13</sup>Bashvekalet İstatistick Umum Müdürlüğü, *İstatistik Yilligi* (Ankara, 1931-1932), V, pp. 35-99.

Turkish progress and obstacles to reform. According to this philosophy, only a Turkish social ideal could lead the world out of the depths into which it had plummeted. The originator and adaptor of this Turkish nationalist philosophy was Ziya Gökalp who represented the blend between secularist reformism common to the late nineteenth century in the Ottoman Empire and the particularism that the Ottomanists had sought to purge out of their midst. His ideology symbolized the current then flowing in the Turkish world.<sup>14</sup>

Gökalp adopted Western European sociological theory to develop his ideal community. As a positivist, he originated a sociological theory of nation based upon his studies of Durkheim. He argued that the only real value discernible in life was the "ideal" (*mefkure*), that is the commonly accepted social ideal. This "ideal" only possessed true value when individual consciousness was subjected to it and derived its personality from it. The individual must conform to this social ideal for numerous reasons. No meaning or existence could be comprehended outside the common ideal. All groups or individuals existing outside and wishing not to accept the ideal were considered a burden to society according to Gökalp — they were an immoral obstacle to be eradicated without mercy. Total conformity to the community represented the goal in Gökalp's ideal society. Needless to say, the social ideal was Turkish nationalism.

Before discussing the specifics in Gökalp's theory of Turkish nationalism, it is important to draw attention to the place held by this sociological theory. In many ways, it reflected what had been occurring in the Ottoman Empire since even the late eighteenth century. The Ottoman governing elite had been searching for a way in which people could be made to conform to an Ottoman social ideal. Ahmed Lütfi's belief about the development of a prosperous society, according to which those who felt security would have more zeal for the motherland, certainly reflects an "ideal" community to which conformity would be desirable.<sup>15</sup> It was the role of the Tanzimat reformers to build up this community, by force if necessary. The Young Ottoman ideals summarized in Midhat Pasha's Constitution of 1876 attempted to bring this ideal to fruition and to build a society where all groups in the Empire cooperated with one another in the spirit of brotherhood. Abdul Hamid II's pure autocracy overwhelmed their efforts, though. Yet in the next generation, thinkers such as Gökalp and activists such as the officers and bureaucrats in the Committee for Union and Progress were able to give this progressive ideal more concrete form and to initiate a body of ideals they could put into force. The Committee for Union and Progress (*İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti*) culminated the drive to build a society based upon conformity to a common social ideal. In this case, however, the ideal had been narrowed from Ottomanism to Turkish nationalism. It also inherited the tremendous autocratic and

<sup>14</sup>Uriel Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism, The Life and Teachings of Ziya Gökalp* (London, 1950).

<sup>15</sup> See above, pp. 26-27.

military force built up by Abdul Hamid. This combination of factors precipitated the worst Armenian massacres: the Genocide by the Young Turk government during the First World War. The Young Turks were avid believers in Gökalp's vision.

The keystone in Gökalp's approach could be labelled nationalism, paralleling national socialist movements in Germany and Italy. Gökalp formulated a Turkish *urgeschichte* which possessed uncanny similarities to the Hitlerian and Wagnerian versions of the Germanic past. It would be more correct to say that this history was actually a fantasy, distorted to arouse interest and following. Fact was mixed heavily with fiction to create an aesthetically appealing vision of the past. The original Turks possessed all the finest qualities such as open-handed hospitality, modesty, faithfulness, courage, prowess, moral uprightness, and so on. The original Turks were devoid of fanaticism, evil qualities and imperialism, according to Gökalp. They viewed their neighbors with only the kindest affection. Everything good emanated from or was invented by Turkish society in its earliest, primeval state. This reminds one of the Aryan myth which bounced around in Germany since the 1860s and 1870s, where the same ideals were attributed to the so-called pure Aryans, although it cannot be assumed that Gökalp borrowed from the German model necessarily. Gökalp believed that the original Turkic virtues had been corrupted and that other peoples had grown out of Turks, whom he considered the ancestors of all humanity. It was time, he thought, to eradicate all these corrupting external forces and return to the original virtues which had made the early Turkic world such an ideal and perfect place.<sup>16</sup>

What Wagner was to Hitler, Gökalp was to Enver Pasha. Gökalp, though, was only one of the penmen of Turkish nationalism. As in all movements, more than one intellectual was involved and more than one level of understanding perceived the implementation of the ideals. Gökalp's ideal society requiring conformity fit well with the autocratic ideals evolving during the course of the twentieth century. The theory gave sanction to an elite grasping for power in a collapsing world. Gökalp's approach supported the mobilization of society in the name of a particular cause (the Turkish nation) and the violent application of these ideals in order to strengthen the new social order. Society must purge itself through heightened emotions of the impure elements in its midst.

Gökalp's theory and its pragmatic application meant little more than the eradication of all non-Turkish societies in the shrinking Ottoman Empire. By creating a loyalty among non-Turkish subjects, it was believed they would resist outsiders more faithfully. If they ac-

<sup>16</sup>For Gökalp's sociological ideal, see: Ziya Gökalp, *Türkleshmek, Islamlaşmak, Muasirlaşmak* (Istanbul, 1918), p. 42; idem., *Türkchülüğün Esasları* (Ankara, 1339), pp. 38-40, 63-66; idem., *Yeni Mejmua* (Istanbul, 1918), no. 27, p. 1a; idem., *Küçük Mejmua* (Diyarbakir, 1922-1923), VIII, 14; plus other works. On his Turkish nationalism and Turkism, see: Ziya Gökalp, *Yeni Mejmua*, nos. 23, 33, 34, 35, 39; idem., *Türkchülüğün Esasları*, pp. 31-36, 138-140, 150-159.

cepted Turkism and became Turks, they were welcome. If they retained their old community values, they were obstacles to change, cancers to the system, and needed to be destroyed by force. It was this theory which backed the Balkan Wars, the Ottoman entry into the First World War, and the massacres of Armenians and Arabs during the war. The brutality of its narrow and limited cultural vision is still felt by non-Turkish peoples living in Turkey today.

#### THE COMMITTEE OF UNION AND PROGRESS AND THE PRACTICE OF TURKISH NATIONALISM

Abdul Hamid's reign witnessed the growth of secret societies aimed at overthrowing his autocracy. These societies grew out of bitter disappointment at the failure of the Ottoman constitutional movement and included intellectuals as well as dissatisfied army officers. Ottomanism metamorphosized into Turkism during this period, often times with the cooperation of non-Turks who sought to overthrow the Sultan. The most important of the groups was the *Ittihad ve Terraki Cemiyeti*, which came to absorb a broad variety of liberal, progressive, and Turkish nationalist cliques and secret organizations. This process of absorption and alliance began in the 1890s and continued until the overthrow of Abdul Hamid II. One such group was that founded in 1905 by Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk) and known as *Vatan* (Homeland or Fatherland), an obvious Turkish nationalist group. It was organized secretly among army officers in Thessaloniki, Jerusalem, and Jaffa. Another such group was the Ottoman Liberty Society (*Osmanli Hürriyet Cemiyeti*) which appeared among army officers and bureaucrats in Macedonia. In addition to certain social and political groupings, there were isolated Turkish individuals who took part in expanding the Turkish national aspects of the movement. These included Central Asian and Caucasian Turks fleeing Tsarist oppression, Balkan Turks fleeing the Hapsburg advance, and Turks from Anatolia and Azerbaijan. These individuals were scholars, intellectuals, journalists, and professionals, among whom one must include Ziya Gökalp.<sup>17</sup> Other nationalist groups (Muslim, Arab, Armenian, and Slavic among others) cooperated with the Committee of Union and Progress before 1908 in an effort to dethrone Abdul Hamid, but none had a connection with the army as did the Turkish nationalists. When Ziya Gökalp emerged as the dominant intellectual force after the downfall of Abdul Hamid II, his ideas possessed the full backing of the army. Turkish nationalism took a central place in the Ottoman state and began enforcing non-Turkish groups in the Empire to conform to their social programs. This meant forcing non-Turkish children to learn how to become "good Turks" in school and imposing a totalitarian conception of Turkish nationalism upon the Empire's other subjects. At first, in the 1908/9-1913 era, non-Turks were permitted to serve in the parliament, but after 1913 parliamentary govern-

<sup>17</sup>David Kishner, *The Origins of Turkish Nationalism* (London, 1977).

ment was ended and a policy of promoting Turks over other groups became paramount — a policy still operating in Turkey today.

The ever-narrowing social ambitions of the Ottoman reformers brought an ever-increasing possibility of genocide to the fore. The first massacres of the 1830s and 1840s were the result of the reformers' desire to bring the *millets* into line with the Ottoman effort to subvert the old system. The Ottomanist constitutional reforms of the 1860s and 1870s aimed at keeping the old millet system subservient but also wished to "regulate" this organization more fully by creating constitutions for each group of subjects and excluding them from making any governmental decisions on their own. As a general rule, the toll of those killed rose during this era: even Ottomanism meant an extension of the genocidal tendency. The Committee of Union and Progress raised this possibility of genocidal havoc to a new height. The Committee wanted not only to regulate non-Turkish groups, but to make them into Turks. If they could not convert or did not wish to convert, the Turks considered them anti-social, possessing only negative value, and hence worthy only of extermination. The Committee of Union and Progress and the government it formed, notably under Enver, Talaat, and Jemal Pashas, truly became the most explosive manifestation of reform in the Ottoman system. Being the most functionally narrow, it became the most murderous. Previous massacres and social dislocations paled by comparison with the massacres of 1915-1918. Yet, with forces mounting, genocide of one type or another would have been inevitable. Reform had wrought this destiny.

#### THE MASSACRES AND THE IMPULSE TO IGNORE THEM

Insularity best describes the approach which could ignore such massive upheavals as the Armenian massacres. Turkish thought has blocked out certain points considered irrelevant and built up others perceived as more important. Attempts to characterize the massacres as minor incidents in a terrible war, whether Turkish or non-Turkish, have linked modern Turks intimately with the Turkish nationalist cause either because of a similarity of beliefs or some ulterior motive.

Single-minded, unswerving devotion to the cause of nationalism also led to the justification of the massacres and deportations leading to the Genocide. Certain Turkish nationalists, including Jemal Pasha, were so devoted to the formation of a Turkish nation that they believed full well that all non-Turkish peoples within their grasp must be annihilated to make room for the Turks. Few accept this course as realistic, since it is considered poor propaganda to display one's kill so openly. Turks still devoted to the nationalist cause in recent times have generally followed the former course.

Moderate and leftist Turks have begun to recognize the Armenian plight within the last two decades, though the stream of the realization is still very small and frequently those with integrity end up in exile. These Turks have suffered, on a smaller scale, the same fate as Armenians.



The rest of this paper will deal mainly with the first two approaches. Both were derived from Ziya Gökalp's theories or political attitudes derived from or under the influence of Gökalp's thought. To this extent, nearly every attempt to explain away or every attempt to ignore Armenians' plight translated the exclusiveness attached to the Turkish nation in Gökalp's theory into action or into political platitudes. Whether ignoring the issue or claiming that Armenians should have been massacred, the motivation was the nationalist claim first put forth by Gökalp and the Young Turks that Armenians (and other non-Turkic peoples such as Arabs) had no place in the Ottoman Empire. This strain of thought still pervades Turkey today. Kurds, who cannot by any stretch of the imagination be considered Turks, are called "mountain Turks" by numerous scholars and are considered as part of the Turkish population. Thus, Turks can show the world that Turkey is ninety-seven percent Turkish. Such wishful thinking hides the fact that as much as one-eighth of the population is Kurdish, that many eastern Anatolian Turks do not identify fully with the Turkish national ideal, and that numbers of Arab tribal and village peoples in southeastern Turkey know Turkish only as a second language. It is fear of these internal divisions which continues to abet the coverup of the Armenian massacres and stimulates the continual rebirth of the Turkish nationalist school of thought out of its own ashes.

Whether rooted in silence about the Armenian Genocide or claiming the Turks to be justified in killing so many Armenians, political approaches to the problem and historical theories of Turkish national development take two major directions in perceiving the issue. Armenians are viewed as obstacles to reform and progressive social change as perceived in the sociological approach. The more chauvinistic attitude views Armenians as a "white man's burden" or sorts to be laughed at and certainly not to be taken seriously since, in comparison to Turks, they were only subhuman and did not deserve indulgence. Such attitudes are found in many Turkish works. The first method has links with Gökalp's sociological formulations or with ideas derived from them. Such sociological principles distilled by propaganda and frozen into rigid categories were no less chauvinistic than the nationalistic view, which derived out of the second category. Often times, the two approaches were mixed together. Other times, they appeared separately.

#### THE SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH AND THE NATIONALISTIC HISTORIOGRAPHY

The first document in which the sociological approach was applied in a pragmatic atmosphere was the Ottoman Constitution, formulated in the Young Turk period between 1909 and 1911. For the first time, there was official sanction given to the existence of only one *millet*. This represented a drastic and more totalitarian shift from the multiple *millet* system to a narrower version of statehood based upon a supposedly more rational citizenship in one nation. By founding only one

nation or *millet* (in the secular sense), Young Turks sought to develop a rationally ordered society where all members fit into a neatly ordered space. The only problem was that the Young Turks forgot to account for the peoples who had lived under the old multiple *millet* system. Even if certain non-Turks wished to join the new state as first-class citizens, they could not do so. All non-Turks were immediately suspect just for not being Turks. No freedom of speech was extended to them, and the right to join the new parliament or to make gatherings of their own was forbidden to them. Any involvement in political organizations, whether in the old millets or in the local organizations of diverse and varying types, was punishable by varying prison sentences. Pursuit battalions were organized in order to enforce the restriction on political activity. This particular law made peoples who did not fit the Turkish mold criminals suitable only for punishment, even if they engaged solely in social gatherings. The Ottoman state now considered such gatherings anti-social and threatening to the ambitions of the state. In short, the foundations had been laid for the reign of terror that marked the years before the First World War. According to this constitution, there was only one *millet*. All had to conform or pay the consequences.<sup>18</sup>

This principle was adapted by Enver, Jemal, and Talaat Pashas, as well as in the constitution promulgated by Atatürk, himself a Young Turk. If not intellectual giants, all these military leaders were susceptible to the propaganda spun by Turkish nationalist ideologues. Jemal Pasha's memoirs give suitable evidence of his attachment to the sociological norm the Young Turks wished to establish. More telling is the credo which Atatürk established as a principle in the Turkish republican constitution and which he built into a pillar of the Republican People's Party (*Halk Partisi*). Article 88 in this constitution declared that people living in the Turkish republic were Turks regardless of their race or religion. This literally meant that all peoples living in Turkey were required to conform to the Turkic ideal and could no longer establish separate cultural identities for themselves. This so-called equality was a matter of enforced assimilation. Individual rights were sacrificed to conformity to a single ideal of Turkish culture.<sup>19</sup> In the wake of this law, all subjects of the Turkish republic were forced to learn the new Turkish culture created, in a sense, by Atatürk and the intellectuals which he approved as educational leaders. Not only was a new alphabet formed, but the process of purging the Turkish language of all non-Turkish elements began. New Turkish words were created daily — a process which continues to this day. Indeed, Turkish history, like Turkish language, was created. Where no suitable evidence existed to support a theory, evidence was contrived. It is this approach, more than any other, which enables Turks to ignore the massacres and to cover up the genocide.

Literary evidence for the sociological approach, both in its intellec-

<sup>18</sup>Düstür: Tertib-i Sani (Istanbul, 1329/1911), I, pp. 169-174, 638-644.

<sup>19</sup>Türk Cumhuriyeti Maarif Vekaleti, *Maarif Ilgili Kanunlar* (Ankara, 1947), p. 144.

tual and propagandized forms, is common and extensive. It stretches from the writings of Gökâlp and intellectuals to the memoirs of officials. Nearly all provide some sociological guideline or reflect the fact that they themselves had been socialized.

This trend to place social order into absolutes through which all emotions could be channeled can be traced back to Gökâlp himself. In the poem *Vazife*, Gökâlp stated the following:

What is duty? A voice that comes down from the throne of God,  
Reverberating the consciousness of my nation.  
I am a soldier, it is my commander  
I obey without question all its orders.  
With closed eyes  
I carry out my duty.<sup>20</sup>

More than just the obvious connotations for the Armenian massacres, this statement shows the desire to obey, on the part of Gökâlp, a social ideal blindly. It is this monolithic adherence to a singular (rather than a multiple) social order that runs throughout the sources. More than anything else, it conveys a sense of solidarity which was stated in an emotionally arousing manner. This emotionalism more than anything else made the massacres possible, since it became possible to commit horrendous crimes without hesitation. The infliction of death, rape, theft, enforced migration, and other violent excesses could be committed in the name of duty, plan or no plan. The preoccupation with solidarity reached its extreme manifestation in other Gökâlp poems:

In the bodies there is multiplicity,  
In the hearts there is unity,  
There are no individuals, there is (only) society.<sup>21</sup>

The extreme desire for unity at any cost meant many deaths and the final destruction of the other Middle Eastern societies within the reach of the new Turkish state. The sin of murder could be overlooked by subsequent Turks in the following generations because the acts purged society of what Turks believed a burden to their self-defense and an obstacle to Turkish unity.

Jemal Pasha made the same arguments. He felt more Turks were massacred by what he considered the evil Armenians than the other way around. He admitted some Turkish complicity in atrocities and massacres, but he explained that the Turks were only following their duty and this absolved them of any crime. In the long run, of course, such excuses only efface the truth. In fact, in this claim, the truth is just under the surface. Jemal Pasha saw duty as a reason for murder, but the state to which he claimed loyal service was little more than a shell — an army and a bureaucracy with little else. The new constitution had been abrogated in 1913, making the subjects' lives even more precarious than they had been before. The ideal to which he claimed

<sup>20</sup>Ziya Gökalp, *Yeni Hayat* (Istanbul, 1941), p. 12, translated in Uriel Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism* (London, 1950), p. 124.

<sup>21</sup>Ziya Gökalp, *Tevhid*, p. 79 applies the Sufi mystical concept of *tevhid* or *tauhid* to national unity. U. Heyd, *Foundations*, p. 56.

loyalty and dutiful service did not exist at the time he claims Turks killed Armenians. The admission to killing and the poor excuse of duty amount in themselves to a genocidal act, since they recount the eradication of entire communities. The more Jemal Pasha sought to blame Armenians or make excuses, the more evident the genocide became. No excuse could stand by itself, though, and Jemal's arguments only served to confirm the fact that the massacres did take place.<sup>22</sup>

The overwhelming majority of accounts admit no criminal act was perpetrated. This blind side indicates that the Turkish community was too drawn up in its own internal processes to relate its society to other societies around itself in a peaceful or understanding manner. There was only one perfect society for them — Turkish society. All others were imperfect and must either be seduced to join the Turkish cause or be destroyed. Even Turks who do not accept this extreme — and these are now becoming a majority — are still concerned too much with the processes of Turkish society to be concerned about Armenia or Armenians. The consensus of these silent reports is that the Armenians were a burden, a "problem." Certainly, the entire theme of Esat Uras' book on Armenians was that they were a problem (*mesele*) and that they constituted an immense diplomatic predicament to the Turks. When one gets to the core of the work's thesis, it is evident that Uras sought a way to be rid of the Armenian problem, as he coined it, and to show, from the diplomatic point of view, why it was necessary to externalize the Armenians, exclude them from the Turkish state, and in effect beat them down.<sup>23</sup> While for many years he was the only Turkish scholar to deal with the Armenians, his effort was far from complete. He does not even mention massacres or deportations and views Armenians as a problem to the Turks, but not the other way around.

Turks did write about the Armenian problem in more impartial fashion, but they still viewed it as a problem. These generally wrote in exile, cut off from Turkey. Ahmed Emin admitted the Armenians died in hundreds of thousands (at least 500,000 according to his own statement). However, he argued that Turkish soldiers comported themselves correctly and the deaths were the result of Kurdish raiders, famine, and plague. This approach is also false and merely serves as an apologetic excuse to the internal problems existing in Middle Eastern society.<sup>24</sup>

The sociological strain influenced even the recent socioeconomic school of historians, both Turkish and Western, concerned with Ottoman and modern Turkish history. Writing in 1976, A.N. Kurat stated: "It was at least as much the spirit of mountain tribesmen as of religious revolt, no doubt, that resisted the assimilation of some Slav,

<sup>22</sup>Jemal Pasha (Djermal Pasha), *Memories of a Turkish Statesman, 1913-1919* (New York, 1922), pp. 242-302.

<sup>23</sup>E. Uras, *Tarihî Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi* (Ankara, 1950).

<sup>24</sup>A. Emin, *Turkey in the World War* (New Haven, 1930), p. 221.

Georgian, and Armenian Christians to Ottoman rule. But this was a spirit working ultimately for anarchy, scarcely for improvements. . . ."<sup>25</sup> This argument made the same statement about the position of the subjects as did the early Turkish progressives who viewed other peoples with their own ideas of community as "backward" or "primitive," and worthy only of assimilation or extermination. Such a statement gives tacit support to genocidal principles, and fails to perceive the situation clearly or correctly. It ignores understanding and compassion, while fanning the flames of hatred. Such statements only pave the way for future genocides.

Statistical approaches also make up a branch of this historical school. Attempts to prove that only two hundred thousand deaths occurred, and that these were only incidental to major military actions, famine, or Kurdish raids, distort the truth. Massacres carried out by Ottoman troops did occur as planned genocide and as unplanned murder. Enforced migration itself was a genocidal policy when practiced on such a broad scale, whatever the reasoning. Even if only two hundred thousand died as a result of enforced migration, and this figure is obviously too low, the deaths cannot be justified under any circumstances. They resulted from Ottoman policy promoted by the early Turkish nationalists in Ottoman service. The effort to belittle the number demonstrates crass callousness and the misuse of history to support an indefensible position. The reason that the Turkish statistical information for the period of the massacre is open only to strong supporters of the Turkish nationalist position is that the materials, if they survive, and they surely seem to have survived, prove a holocaust really occurred. Statistical manipulations are used to hide the fact. Closed minds only lead to more problems and do not help to solve the problems of the past.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to the sociological and socioeconomic approaches, there was and is a historical approach based solely upon *urgeschichte* theories developed by Gökalp and instituted under the auspices of Atatürk. This direction is more mythology and less history. It parallels the German national tradition under Hitler, which glorified the ancient German warrior cult and the exploits of great German emperors of the past. Such "history" is never accurate or valuable. Such narrowness existed to build up the Turkish national identity. The *Türk Dil Kurumu* and *Türk Tarih Kurumu* (Turkish Language and Turkish History Associations respectively) sponsored official theories of language and culture in the 1920s and 1930s, which were outright distortions of the truth according to even current Turkish

<sup>25</sup>V.J. Parry, et. al., *A History of the Ottoman Empire to 1730* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 188.

<sup>26</sup>The statistical approach is applied by using only one set of national archives and by permitting only certain facts favorable to distinct political groups to enter the picture. Accurate statistics must take into consideration all sides of any given issue. The Turkish government has followed a consistent policy of keeping official statistics under lock and key, if indeed such statistics exist.

nationalists.<sup>27</sup> The sun language theory (*günes dil teorisi*) worked out a ridiculous theory, attempting to show that Turkish was the progenitor of all world languages. Turkish nationalist history claimed that all peoples in the world descended from Turks. The eager search to find the links has been denounced by most Turkish historians in the face of reality, but some still persist.

One historian, Faruk Sümer, changed his name from Demirtaş in the belief that his ancestry (a solid Turkish one) went back to the Sumerians. His own approach is that all Anatolian, Middle Eastern, Caucasian, Central Asian, and other Asian peoples were Turkish by origin. This includes Armenians, whom he would no doubt consider traitors. Sümer has gone so far as to construct zones of Turkish tribal settlement in southwest Asia, showing Anatolia as the origin of all the tribal elites. He has made non-Turks into Turkish tribal affiliates; an example of this would be the Köpeklü tribe of northern Syria. He claims these were Avshar Turks, but he has merely translated the name of the Arab Bedouin tribe Kalb (Dog) into Turkish and called the people Turks. The Kalb tribe was located in Syria and had originated from the Arabian peninsula. He goes to great lengths to demonstrate that all Turkish tribes in Iran migrated from Anatolia in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In fact, most of the Turkish tribes and tribal peoples did not come from Anatolia. While some of the elites did attempt to escape Ottoman expansion, they only came as individuals with a few followers. They were given control of peoples, even non-Turks, who were already in Iran or Iranian Central Asia.<sup>28</sup> Such historical distortions are treated as normal and regular historical facts by most Turkish historians. It must be noted, though, that examples only touch the surface and do not give the full depth of the situation. There are many serious Turkish historians who have tried to avoid the rather embarrassing distortions of their more brash colleagues. These have not been discussed here for lack of space. They have not yet won their struggle, however, and must still face embarrassment.

## CONCLUSIONS

Serious and systematic examinations of the Armenian massacres are very shallow in the Turkish nationalist tradition. Since the Turks have not bothered to think deeply about the problem, they are ill prepared to give an answer. It is quite easy to trace the roots of the Genocide in

<sup>27</sup>Most Turkish scholars reject these ludicrous forays. A certain segment have maintained these approaches, but have catered more to politics than to the study of history. There have been studies linking the Sumerians to modern Turks and the worship of ancient Anatolian sun gods to Tanrı, the Turkish sky god. Other efforts, such as those undertaken by Faruk Sümer, link all Turkish tribes by one common racial bond (which, of course, they are not). Turkish scholars have abandoned these extreme positions to a degree, but some still linger on the outskirts of moderation. As time passes, Turkish scholarship seems to be leaving the old chauvinistic doctrines and more amenable to studying reality. This may in turn pave the way for understanding the Armenian plight.

<sup>28</sup>Faruk Sümer, *Oğuzlar, Türkmenler* (Ankara, 1967); idem., *Safevi Devletinin Kuruluşu ve Gelişmesinde Anadolu Türklerinin Rolü* (Ankara, 1976).

Turkish nationalist thinking of the 1890s and early twentieth century. It is also quite easy to observe that the Genocide was building up within the Ottoman system from an early date, even as far back as the late seventeenth century. The stubborn refusal to acknowledge the fact that many hundreds of thousands of Armenians, even more than one million Armenians, lost their lives as a result of a Turkish nationalist elite in Ottoman service merely delays the inevitable confrontation with conscience. Armenians will continue to suffer from this ignorance. ■